

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 21504 01 OF 02 260851Z
ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 VO-03 CA-01 INS-01
AID-05 /097 W
-----023890 261141Z /20
R 260715Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6630
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL CHIENG MAI
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL SONGKHLA
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 21504

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF TH
SUBJECT: RTG REFUGEE POLICY

REF: UDORN 163 (NOTAL), SONGKHLA 348

1. SUMMARY: THE RTG, AMID THE FANFARE OF A DAY LONG
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 21504 01 OF 02 260851Z

SEPTEMBER 22 CONFERENCE WITH VOLAGS DISCUSSED THEIR STRICT
NEW POLICY TOWARD INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. RTG VIEWS ON RE-
SETTLEMENT WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. THE REFUGEE TOTAL HAS
RISEN SHARPLY OVER THE SUMMER, AND NOW APPROACHES 90,000.
THE TMAI FEEL THAT THEIR BACKS ARE TO THE WALL.
GIVEN THEIR OWN HUMANITARIANISM, THE RTG WILL
PROBABLY NOT EXECUTE FULLY MANY OF THOSE ASPECTS

OF THE POLICY THAT WE AND OTHERS WOULD FIND MOST
OBJECTIONABLE. HOWEVER THEY APPEAR DETERMINED TO
PROCEED TO IMPLEMENT AT LEAST PARTIALLY THEIR NEW POLICY
ON NOVEMBER ONE. END SUMMARY

2. KEY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOI) OFFICIALS TOOK THE OCCASION
OF A VOLUNTARY AGENCY (VOLAG) SEMINAR ON DISPLACED PERSONS
SEPTEMBER 22 TO REITERATE RTG POLICY ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. POLICY
STATEMENTS WERE MADE (AND REPLAYED IN THE LOCAL PRESS) IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE SECOND RTG/UNHCR AGREEMENT SIGNED JULY 22 AND A VOLAG
REQUEST FOR A CLEARER DEFINITION OF THE VOLAG ROLE. REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE U.S., FRENCH, JAPANESE, AUSTRALIAN, CANADIAN AND
NORWEGIAN EMBASSIES ATTENDED THE SEMINAR, AS WELL AS OUTGOING
MOI UNDER SECRETARY CHALO WANAPHUTI AND UNDER SECRETARY-
DESIGNATE WINYU ANGKHANARAK. MOI DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY DAMRONG
SUNTHONSARATHUN ACTED AS THE RTG SPOKESMAN.

3. THE THRUST OF MOI COMMENTS WAS THAT THAILAND WOULD RESETTLE
A NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AT A FELICITOUS TIME IN THE
FUTURE ONLY IF THE INFLOW DIMINISHED AND THE CURRENT
POPULATION OF SOME 90,000 SHRANK TO SOMETHING ON THE ORDER OF 20,000.
WHILE THE RTG WAS COUNTING ON THIRD COUNTRX RESETTLEMENT AND RE-
PATRIATION TO LAOS TO REDUCE THE CAMP POPULATION OVER THE LONG
TERM, DAMRONG INDICATED THAT FOR THE "SEMI-LONG TERM," STEPS WERE
NEEDED TO IMPROVE REFUGEE SELF-SUFFICIENCY. THE MOI THUS PLEDGED TO
TO CREATE A TRIPARTITE WORKING GROUP COMPOSED OF THE RTG,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 21504 01 OF 02 260851Z

VOLAGS AND THE UNHCR TO COORDINATE MEDIUM TERM PROJECTS TO
AMELIORATE REFUGEE CONDITIONS, AND PERHAPS EVENTUALLY INTEGRATE
INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN THAILAND. DAMRONG UNDERScoreD THE RTG
DOMESTIC POLITICAL DILEMMA WHEN REFUGEES APPEAR TO GET BETTER TREAT-
MENT THAN THE THAI PEOPLE THEMSELVES.

4. DAMRONG SAID THAT BEGINNING NOV 1, THE RTG WOULD BEGIN TO
MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CURRENT REFUGEE POPULATION
AND THE "ILLEGAL ALIENS" WHO WILL BE SEEKING ENTRY AFTER THAT
DATE. (REFTEL A INDICATES THAT SUCH INSTRUCTIONS HAVE ALREADY GONE
TO THE FIELD.) ME NOTED THAT THAILAND HAD ALWAYS MADE A LEGAL
DISTINCTION BETWEEN REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL ALIENS IN THE PAST,
BUT GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE FORMER INDOCHINA
STATES BEGINNING IN 1975, HAD GRANTED ESCAPEES LOCAL
ASYLUM. CHALO, IN HIS OPENING COMMENTS, STATED THAT
THERE WERE "LIMITS" TO THAI HUMANITARIAN FEELINGS AND THAT THE
RTG WOULD HAVE TO IMPOSE RIGID CHECKS TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE
ILLEGAL ENTRANT AND BONA FIDE REFUGEES FROM POLITICAL PERSECUTION.

5. DAMRONG TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER SEPARATELY THAT THE RTG
PLANNED TO OPEN THREE NEW HOLDING FACILITIES IN CHIANG RAI,
BURIRAN. AND NAKHON PHANON PROVINCES WHERE NEW ARRIVALS WILL BE

HELD FOLLOWING SCREENING AT BORDER CROSSING POINTS. (REFTEL A INDICATES THAT THERE MAY BE TWO OTHER SITES, PRESUMABLY FOR BOAT CASE ARRIVALS, AT LAEM SING AND SONGKHLA, THE CURRENT BOAT CASE HAVENS.) THE RTG PLAN, DAMRONG SAID, WAS FOR DISTRICT COMMITTEES COMPOSED OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE, IMMIGRATION, AND SECURITY OFFICIALS TO SCREEN ALL POST NOV 1 ENTRANTS, PREPARE DOSSIERS FOR REFERRAL TO A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE, AND MOVE THE NEW ARRIVALS TO ONE OF THE NEW HOLDING SITES. DAMRONG STRESSED THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS WOULD NOT HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO FORCE REFUGEES TO DEPART.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 21504 02 OF 02 260844Z

ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 VO-03 CA-01 INS-01

AID-05 /097 W

-----023856 260901Z /20

R 260715Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 631

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL CHIENG MAI

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 21504

6. WITH REGARD TO THE 69 REFUGEES AT NONG KHAI WHO ARRIVED WITH AVPARENT LPDR ACQUIESCENCE, DAMRONG INDICATED THAT MOI HAD REFERRED THE MATTER TO THE MFA

FOR REPATRIATION DISCUSSIONS IN VIENTIANE. WHEN
ASKED WHETHER THE CABINET HAD TAKEN DECISION ON
THE 69, DAMRONG INDICATED THAT THE RESOLUTION OF THE
CASE WAS AN MOI-MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESPONSIBI-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 21504 02 OF 02 260844Z

BILITY. THE CABINET HAD NOT DISCUSSED THE ISSUE.

7. COMMENT: THAILAND FEELS ITSELF INUNDATED BY
INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AND SEES NO END TO THE REFUGEE
INFLOW UNLESS IT DRASTICALLY TIGHTENS ITS POLICY OF
HOSPITALITY. HENCE THE JULY 22 AGREEMENT WITH THE
UNHCR, AND THE SCHEDULED NOV 1 SHIFT TO CLASSI-
FYING ESCAPEES AS ILLEGAL ENTRANTS. DAMRONG RECENTLY
VISITED SINGAPORE, AND MAY HAVE DRAWN SOME LESSONS
FROM THE TREATMENT OF REFUGEES THERE. HE IS
SCHEDULED TO GO TO MALAYSIA SOON.

8. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THE RTG INDEED
INTENDS TO REPROVISION ARRIVING BOATS WITHOUT PER-
MITTING REFUGEES TO LAND, AND THEN TOW THEM OUT TO
SEA (REFTEL A). THE SEPTEMBER 21 DEPARTURE, PRESUMABLY
FOR AUSTRALIA, OF THE BOAT ANCHORED OFF SONGHKLA
THAT WAS CARRYING 66 REFUGEES, WAS APPARENTLY A
PRIVATE DECISION OF THOSE ABOARD (REFTEL B), ALTHOUGH
POSSIBLY INDUCED BY THAI DELAY IN ALLOWING THEM ASHORE.
THE OTHER LESS SEAWORTHY BOAT IN SONGHKLA REMAINS
THERE, AND ITS 23 PASSENGERS MAY WELL BE GIVEN
PERMISSION TO DEBARK.

9. IN THE PAST, THE RHETORIC OF THAI POLICY PRO-
NOUNCEMENTS FREQUENTLY WILTS WHEN FACED WITH UNPLEASANT
REALITIES. WE CONTINUE TO DOUBT THAT THE THAI
WOULD CARRY OUT FORCED REPATRIATION AND THAI OFFICIALS
SAY THEY WILL NOT. HOWEVER, THE RTG CLEARLY INTENDS TO
IMPLEMENT AT LEAST PARTIALLY, TOUGHER POLICY AS OF NOVEMBER
FIRST. THIS WILL MEAN ESTABLISHING TWO CLASSES OF REFUGEES AND
MAY WELL BRING STRICTER BORDER CONTROLS WITH THE INCREASED
POSSIBILITY OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION BY PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 21504 02 OF 02 260844Z

OF THE TOUGHER GUIDELINES. FURTHER, RTG DEFINITION OF FORCED
REPATRIATION MAY WELL BE MORE ELASTIC THAN WE WOULD
LIKE, ENCOMPASSING REPATRIATION OF "ILLEGAL ENTRANTS" IN THE
EVENT RTG COULD SECURE FORMAL AGREEMENT BY INDOCHINESE
STATES TO ACCEPT THEM BACK WITHOUT PUNISHMENT. IN PRACTICAL TERMS,

RTG WOULD RECOGNIZE ANY SUCH AGREEMENT IS CONCEIVABLE WITH LAOS ALONE IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. NEW THAI AMBASSADOR PROBABLY WILL MAKE SUCH AN AGREEMENT SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION WITH LPDR, AS UNHCR AND RTG DID IN THE PAST.

10. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO REITERATE, IN A LOW KEY MANNER, THE NECESSITY FOR THE RTG TO BE HOSPITABLE TO INCOMING BOAT CASE REFUGEES, AND OUR FIRM OPPOSITION TO FORCED REPATRIATION.
WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO21504
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770349-0800
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770924/aaaaatrp.tel
Line Count: 234
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5dc52a3e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION DHA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 UDORN 163, 77 SONGKHLA 348
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1140378
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RTG REFUGEE POLICY
TAGS: SREF, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5dc52a3e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009